



Date: July 22, 2003
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Stage II Fire Restrictions Ordered In Three Southern Montana Counties

Stage II fire restrictions will go into effect on federal, state and private lands in Carbon, Stillwater and Sweet Grass counties, including the Beartooth-Absaroka Wilderness Area, beginning July 25. Stage I restrictions remain in effect on federal, state and private lands in Big Horn, Musselshell, Treasure, and Yellowstone counties.

The change to Stage II fire restrictions was prompted by an increase in the number of human-caused fires, extremely dry conditions and the high demand for fire crews and other resources. The continuing hot, dry weather will intensify this situation.

The public is asked to honor the restrictions to decrease the chance of more human-caused fires and avoid resource and property damage. Anyone who causes a wildland fire intentionally or through negligence may be held accountable for damage and suppression costs.

Under Stage II fire restrictions, the following acts are prohibited: building, maintaining or using a campfire; smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable materials; operating motorized vehicles off designated roads and trails. Other prohibited activities include operating a chainsaw or other equipment powered by an internal combustion engine, blasting or welding, between 1 p.m. and 1 a.m.

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Under Stage I, the following acts are prohibited: building, maintaining, attending or using a fire or campfire except within a developed recreation site, or improved site; and smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable materials.

For both Stage I and Stage II, exemptions are allowed for persons using a fire solely fueled by liquid petroleum or LPG; for a federal, state, or local officer, or member of an organized law enforcement, rescue, or firefighting force in the performance of an official duty; or for persons with a permit or written authorization allowing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.

The Billings Area Restrictions Group coordinates fire restrictions on federal, state and private land in the Billings area. It includes representatives from the Forest Service; Bureau of Land Management; Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and the counties of Big Horn, Carbon, Musselshell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, and Yellowstone.

For more information, please contact the Custer National Forest at 406-657-6200; Bureau of Land Management at 406-896-5013; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation at 406-247-4400; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks at 406-247-2940; Carbon County at 406-446-1595; Stillwater County at 406-321-0204; or your local fire department or sheriff's office.

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